



July 2014

DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

DOD Needs to Improve Future Assessments of Roles and Missions

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Why GAO Did This Study

DOD is one of the largest organizations in the world, with its budget representing over half of the U.S. federal government's discretionary spending. According to DOD, the global security environment presents an increasingly complex set of challenges. Congress requires DOD to assess and report on its roles and missions every 4 years. In July 2012, DOD submitted its most recent Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review report.

In June 2013, GAO was mandated to review DOD's process for conducting the latest Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. GAO evaluated the extent to which DOD developed a sufficiently detailed report and conducted a comprehensive process for assessing roles and missions. GAO compared DOD's July 2012 report with the statutory requirements for the assessment, and compared DOD's assessment process with key principles derived from a broad selection of principles GAO and other federal agencies have identified.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that, in conducting future assessments of roles and missions, DOD develop a comprehensive process that includes a planned approach, involvement of key internal and external stakeholders, and time frames. DOD partially concurred, stating that it had leveraged other processes. GAO maintains that the roles and missions report was insufficiently detailed and continues to believe the recommendation is valid, as discussed in the report.

View [GAO-14-668](#). For more information, contact John H. Pendleton at (202) 512-3489 or pendletonj@gao.gov.

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DEFENSE MANAGEMENT

DOD Needs to Improve Future Assessments of Roles and Missions

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense's (DOD) July 2012 submission to Congress following its most recent Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review did not provide sufficiently detailed information about most of the statutorily required elements of the assessment. Specifically, DOD's July 2012 submission included the results of a 2011 review that led to the January 2012 release of a new strategic guidance document (hereinafter referred to as the Defense Strategic Guidance) as well as the *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* report. Although DOD is not statutorily required to report on all elements of the assessment, the submission that it provided to Congress was lacking key information. A key principle for information quality indicates that information presented to Congress should be clear and sufficiently detailed; however, neither the Defense Strategic Guidance nor the *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* included sufficiently detailed information about certain key elements of the roles and missions assessment. For example, while the submitted documents identify the core missions of the armed services and provide some information on capabilities associated with these missions, neither document provides other information required by the roles and missions assessment—including identifying the DOD components responsible for providing the identified core competencies and capabilities and identifying plans for addressing any unnecessary duplication or capability gaps.

DOD's process for assessing roles and missions missed key principles associated with effective and comprehensive assessments. Specifically, DOD limited its process to leveraging the prior review that resulted in the Defense Strategic Guidance; by doing so its process did not include the following:

- *A planned approach*: DOD did not develop or document a planned approach that included the principles or assumptions used to inform the assessment.
- *Internal stakeholder involvement*: DOD included limited internal stakeholder involvement. For example, DOD gave the armed services a limited opportunity to review the draft prior to its release.
- *Identification and involvement of external stakeholders*: DOD obtained limited input from relevant external stakeholders, such as Congress, on the specific guidance and direction they expected of the roles and missions assessment.
- *Time frames*: DOD did not develop a schedule to gauge progress for conducting the assessment and completing the report, which may have contributed to the report being provided to Congress over 5 months late.

DOD officials stated that the primary reason that they did not perform a separate roles and missions review is that the statutory requirements were duplicative of other reviews and processes, such as the Defense Strategic Guidance. However, by not conducting a comprehensive assessment, DOD missed an opportunity to conduct a department-wide examination of roles and missions. Instead, by relying on processes established for other purposes, DOD has limited assurance that it has fully identified all possible cost savings that can be achieved through the elimination of unnecessary duplication and that it has positioned itself to report clear and sufficient information about the statutorily required assessment to Congress.

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Abbreviations

DOD Department of Defense

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July 31, 2014

Congressional Committees

The Department of Defense (DOD) is one of the largest and most complex organizations in the world, and its budget represents over half of the entire U.S. federal government's discretionary spending. DOD stated in *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (hereinafter referred to as the Defense Strategic Guidance) that the global security environment presents an increasingly complex set of challenges and opportunities.¹ These include those resulting from geopolitical changes, changes in modern warfare, and changes in the fiscal environment. It is important, therefore, that DOD make decisions strategically regarding its missions and associated competencies and capabilities, and assign and clarify to its components their roles and responsibilities while avoiding unnecessary duplication.

DOD is required to regularly assess and report on its roles and missions in the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. Specifically, every 4 years, DOD is required to assess the roles and missions of the armed services, including their core competencies and capabilities to support DOD missions.² DOD is, among other things, required to identify which office, agency, activity, or command is responsible for providing these core competencies and capabilities, any gaps in core competencies and capabilities, and any unnecessary duplication of effort. DOD is to submit to Congress a report of this assessment no later than the date the President submits the budget for the next fiscal year.³ A comprehensive, department-wide assessment of DOD's roles and missions can provide

¹Department of Defense, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (January 2012) (hereinafter referred to as the Defense Strategic Guidance). The document identifies strategic interests of the United States and outlines security challenges and opportunities.

²10 U.S.C. §118b.

³10 U.S.C. §118b(d). Additionally, the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 provided further guidance that the report on the 2011 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review should "provide clear guidance on the nature and extent of which core competencies are associated with" information operations activities and detention and interrogation activities, and it should identify the elements of DOD that are, or should be, responsible for providing those core competencies, Pub. L. No. 111-383, §942(b).

DOD an opportunity to identify core competencies and capabilities, including human capital and acquisition needs, and to clearly assign responsibility for these competencies and capabilities across the department. By routinely reviewing its roles and missions, DOD is better suited to support the development of key strategy and policy guidance, as found in the Defense Strategic Guidance and the Quadrennial Defense Review,⁴ and to keep DOD implementing directives that formally establish the roles of DOD components current.

Our prior body of work has found that the department needs to assess its strategic roles and mission needs, such as human capital management and prioritization of major capital investments including weapon system acquisitions. Since 2001, we have listed strategic human capital management as a government-wide, high-risk area, stating that serious human capital shortfalls threatened the ability of many federal agencies to economically, efficiently, and effectively perform their missions.⁵ In February 2011, we narrowed the scope of our high-risk area to focus on the most significant challenge remaining—closing mission critical skills gaps.⁶ We have also made specific recommendations to DOD to improve the department's use of its critical skills and competency assessments to inform its strategic human capital management, concluding that it is imperative that the department cautiously and strategically take into account critical skills and competencies needed to maintain and meet its missions.⁷ We also have found that DOD can improve its acquisition

⁴The Quadrennial Defense Review is a legally required comprehensive examination of the national defense strategy, force structure, force modernization plans, infrastructure, budget planning, and other elements of the defense program and policies of the United States. The results of DOD's most recent Quadrennial Defense Reviews were reported in 2010 and 2014.

⁵GAO, *High-Risk Series: An Update*, [GAO-01-263](#) (Washington, D.C.: January 2001).

⁶GAO, *High-Risk Series: An Update*, [GAO-11-278](#) (Washington, D.C.: February 2011). While improvements have been made, this area remained on the high-risk list for the last iteration of the report. See GAO, *High-Risk Series: An Update*, [GAO-13-283](#) (Washington, D.C.: February 2013).

⁷See GAO, *Human Capital: Critical Skills and Competency Assessments Should Help Guide DOD Civilian Workforce Decisions*, [GAO-13-188](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 17, 2013). We found that DOD had not yet completed required competency gap assessments to inform its strategic workforce planning. DOD partially concurred with our recommendation, but noted that the size and structure of the workforce is driven by capabilities, mission, and workload and not by competencies and skills; however, the department plans to complete its competency gap assessments by 2015.

outcomes by pursuing an integrated portfolio management approach to weapon system investments.⁸ We found that, although the armed services fight together on the battlefield as a joint force, they identify needs and allocate resources separately, using fragmented decision-making processes that do not allow for an integrated portfolio management approach, potentially resulting in capability gaps or unnecessary duplication.⁹ Further, we have found that DOD can reduce unnecessary duplication, overlap, and fragmentation in its programs and operations, thereby potentially achieving cost savings.¹⁰

A comprehensive assessment of DOD's roles and missions is intended to clarify responsibilities for providing key capabilities, identify areas of unnecessary duplication, and identify opportunities for reducing waste in a time of constrained defense budgets. However, Congress has raised concerns with both of the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review submissions that DOD has issued to date. DOD provided its first submission in January 2009, which the House Armed Services Committee found was lacking in completeness.¹¹ Specifically, the committee urged the Secretary of Defense to take a more comprehensive approach, instead of focusing only on the department's planned investments to meet asymmetric challenges. In July 2012, DOD provided its second submission.¹² In the House Armed Services Committee's

⁸GAO, *Best Practices: An Integrated Portfolio Management Approach to Weapon System Investments Could Improve DOD's Acquisition Outcomes*, [GAO-07-388](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 30, 2007).

⁹Additionally, we recommended that DOD incorporate certain commercial best practices and develop a stronger joint analytical capability to assess and prioritize warfighter needs. DOD mostly concurred with these recommendations and noted efforts it had under way.

¹⁰See for example, GAO, *2014 Annual Report: Additional Opportunities to Reduce Fragmentation, Overlap and Duplication and Achieve Other Financial Benefits*, [GAO-14-343SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 8, 2014). One area identified by our work was in Army workforce planning where we found that there was potential overlap between two Army information systems that support workforce planning. The Army had begun an assessment to determine whether unnecessary overlap exists, and we recommended increased leadership involvement and the establishment of a fully developed and documented approach for the assessment. The Army declined to comment on these specific recommendations; however, we continue believe that the recommendations are valid.

¹¹H.R. Rep. No. 112-78, at 176 (2011).

¹²Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* (July 2012). This submission also included the Defense Strategic Guidance.

report accompanying the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, the committee stated that the 2012 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review submission also did not meet expectations and was late.¹³ The committee stated in the report that the submission identified only the missions of the armed services, one of six required elements of the roles and missions assessment.¹⁴

The House Armed Services Committee report accompanying its bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014 mandated us to review the Secretary of Defense's process for conducting the 2012 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review.¹⁵ This report evaluates the extent to which DOD developed a sufficiently detailed report and conducted a comprehensive process for assessing roles and missions.

To evaluate the extent to which DOD developed a sufficiently detailed report and conducted a comprehensive process for assessing roles and missions, we reviewed DOD's final submission for the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review, which included the *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* report and the Defense Strategic Guidance, and we reviewed the specific processes DOD used to conduct the assessment that preceded it. For our review of DOD's submission, three GAO analysts independently compared DOD's July 2012 submission for the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review with the statutory requirements for the assessment. A fourth analyst reviewed the results of these independent comparisons to confirm that consensus had been reached by the other analysts. In addition, we used this kind of methodology to compare the information in DOD's submission with the key principle that the information be sufficiently detailed when reporting information for use

¹³H.R. Rep. No. 113-102, at 196-98 (2013). The Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review report is due no later than when the President submits the budget request for the next fiscal year. The fiscal year 2013 budget was submitted on February 13, 2012, and the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review was submitted on July 20, 2012.

¹⁴The committee also noted that it "believes the failure to identify core mission areas, core competencies, capability gaps, unnecessary duplications, and plans for addressing any such gaps or duplications, undermines national security and wastes valuable defense funds in a time of constrained budgets. The committee is disappointed that the Department did not leverage the requirement for the 2012 QRMR as a tool for reducing waste, while also improving its joint warfighting capability." H.R. Rep. No. 113-102, at 197 (2013).

¹⁵H.R. Rep. No. 113-102, at 198 (2013).

by Congress and other decision makers, which we derived from GAO and DOD guidance.¹⁶ For additional context, these analysts also independently conducted a similar analysis of DOD's 2009 *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* report.¹⁷ For our review of DOD's specific processes, we compared DOD's processes for the assessment with key principles for conducting similar reviews, which we derived from a broad selection of principles GAO has previously established, and other federal agency guidance related to conducting department-wide assessments.¹⁸ Specifically, we distilled the key principles from relevant guidance from the Office of Management and Budget for conducting strategic reviews and plans and from DOD for providing high-quality information; desirable characteristics for developing an effective national strategy; guidance for conducting studies; and relevant principles for reporting on and conducting other types of assessments such as risk and cost assessments. Of the documents we reviewed, the principles we chose were found in multiple documents and were applicable to comprehensive assessments such as the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. We discussed these principles with DOD officials, who agreed they were reasonable to use to evaluate the assessment process. We also

¹⁶See GAO, *A Guide for Using the GPRA Modernization Act to Help Inform Congressional Decision Making*, [GAO-12-621SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 12, 2012); GAO, *Defense Transportation: Study Limitations Raise Questions about the Adequacy and Completeness of the Mobility Capabilities Study and Report*, [GAO-06-938](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 20, 2006), which applied generally accepted research standards; GAO, *Force Structure: Army's Annual Report on Modularity Progress Needs More Complete and Clear Information to Aid Decision Makers*, [GAO-13-183R](#) (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 16, 2013); and Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, *Information Quality Guidelines (IQG): Ensuring the Quality of Information Disseminated to the Public* (revised, February 2007).

¹⁷Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report* (January 2009).

¹⁸See Office of Management and Budget, *Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, Performance Reviews, and Annual Program Performance Reports*, Circular No. A-11, Part 6 (July 2013); GAO, *Combating Terrorism: Evaluation of Selected Characteristics in National Strategies Related to Terrorism*, [GAO-04-408T](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 3, 2004); [GAO-12-621SP](#); GAO, *GAO Cost Estimating and Assessment Guide: Best Practices for Developing and Managing Capital Program Costs*, [GAO-09-3SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: March 2009); [GAO-06-938](#), which applied generally accepted research standards; GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#) (Washington, D.C.: November 1999); Interagency Security Committee, *The Risk Management Process for Federal Facilities: An Interagency Security Committee Standard* (August 2013), and Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK® Guide)* (2000).

interviewed officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Office of Director of Administration and Management, Department of the Army, Department of the Navy, Department of the Air Force, and U.S. Marine Corps about the process that DOD used for the most recent Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review, the extent to which DOD's process for conducting and reporting on the review was comprehensive, and any thoughts on how future reviews might be improved based on lessons learned from the most recent review. Finally, we interviewed eight defense experts selected on the basis of their prior involvement with the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review and authorship of recent publications about the roles and missions of the armed services. While their views are not generalizable, we obtained the experts' perspectives on how future reviews might be improved.

We conducted this performance audit from August 2013 to July 2014 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

Every 4 years, DOD is required to conduct and report on a comprehensive assessment—the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review—of the roles and missions of the armed services and the core competencies and capabilities of DOD to perform and support such roles and missions.¹⁹ Specifically, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is to conduct an independent military assessment of the roles and missions of the armed forces, assignment of functions among the armed services, and any recommendations regarding issues that need to be addressed. The Secretary of Defense is then to identify

¹⁹10 U.S.C. §118b. As of June 2014, legislation has been passed in the House of Representatives to change 10 U.S.C. § 118, which, if enacted, may alter the reporting requirement for the Quadrennial Defense Review and Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. *H.R. 4435, 113th Cong. §1077 (2014)*. See, *H.R. Rep. No. 113-446 at 226-27 (2014)*.

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- the core mission areas of the armed services;
 - the core competencies and capabilities associated with these mission areas;
 - the DOD component responsible for providing the identified core competency or capability;
 - any gaps in the ability of the component to provide the competency or capability;
 - any unnecessary duplication of competencies or capabilities between components; and
 - a plan for addressing any gaps or unnecessary duplication.

The Secretary is then to submit a report on this Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review following the review and not later than the submission of the President's budget for the next fiscal year; however, the statutory reporting requirement does not explicitly require that all required elements of the assessment be reported.²⁰

The Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review that resulted in the July 2012 submission occurred amid a series of strategy and policy reviews that DOD has undertaken over the past 5 years. Some of these reviews resulted in specific strategy documents, such as the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and National Security Space Strategy.²¹ DOD is also required to conduct two reviews on a regular basis that relate to the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review: the Quadrennial Defense Review and the Biennial Review of DOD Agencies and Field Activities. The timing requirements for the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review and the Quadrennial Defense Review result in each Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review occurring 2 years before and 2 years after a Quadrennial Defense Review. In December 2010, DOD also reissued its internal DOD Directive 5100.01, which establishes the functions of DOD and its major

²⁰10 U.S.C. § 118b(d).

²¹President of the United States, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: May 2010); Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: June 2008); Department of Defense, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America: Redefining America's Military Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: February 2011); Department of Defense and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *National Security Space Strategy* (January 2011).

components, and, in September 2011, released an update of the Unified Command Plan, which allocates responsibilities among the combatant commands.²² In addition to these recurring strategy reviews, comprehensive assessments, and updates to DOD guidance, DOD has recently completed two other reviews: the Defense Strategic Guidance, which identified the strategic interests of the United States, and the Strategic Choices Management Review, initiated by the Secretary of Defense in 2013 to inform DOD's planning for declining future budgets.

The Defense Strategic Guidance, released in January 2012, was directed by the President to identify the strategic interests of the United States. The document states that it was an assessment of the defense strategy prompted by the changing geopolitical environment and fiscal pressures. The Defense Strategic Guidance was developed by senior officials from DOD—including the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the armed services, and the combatant commands—and the White House. The document outlines security challenges the United States faces and is intended to guide the development of the Joint Force through 2020 and during a period of anticipated fiscal constraints. The Defense Strategic Guidance identified 10 primary missions of the armed forces, as well as several principles to guide the force and program development necessary to achieve these missions. For more information about the Defense Strategic Guidance and other selected strategy and planning documents, see appendix I.

²²Department of Defense, *Functions of the Department of Defense and Its Major Components*, DOD Directive 5100.01 (Dec. 21, 2010) and *Unified Command Plan* (updated Sept. 12, 2011).

DOD Did Not Provide Sufficiently Detailed Information in Its Report to Congress or Conduct a Comprehensive Process for Assessing Roles and Missions

DOD Did Not Provide Sufficiently Detailed Information to Congress

In July 2012, DOD submitted the *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* report, together with the Defense Strategic Guidance, to Congress to meet the statutory reporting requirement; however, DOD's submission did not provide sufficiently detailed information about most of the statutorily required elements of the assessment.²³ Although the statute does not require DOD to report on all elements of the roles and missions assessment, a key principle for information quality indicates that information presented to Congress should be clear and sufficiently detailed.²⁴ Specifically, we found that DOD provided the missions of the armed services and some information about core capabilities, but did not,

²³The Secretary of Defense is required to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the roles and missions of the armed services and the core competencies and capabilities of DOD to perform and support such roles and missions. Specific required elements of this assessment are provided in statute, see 10 U.S.C. § 118b. The Secretary is then required to submit a report on the roles and missions review in the year following the review, but no later than when the President submits the budget for the next fiscal year to Congress; however, the statutory reporting requirement does not explicitly require that all required elements of the assessment be reported. 10 U.S.C. § 118b(d). In addition, the Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 provided further guidance that the report on the 2011 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review should "provide clear guidance on the nature and extent of which core competencies are associated with information operations activities and detention and interrogation activities, and it should identify the elements of DOD that are, or should be, responsible for providing those core competencies," Pub. L. No. 111-383, §942(b).

²⁴We derived this principle from GAO reports and DOD guidance for providing information to Congress. See [GAO-12-621SP](#) and DOD, *Information Quality Guidelines (IQG): Ensuring the Quality of Information Disseminated to the Public*. See also [GAO-13-183R](#).

for any of the 10 missions, clearly identify the components within the department responsible for providing the core competencies and capabilities, or identify any plans to address any capability gaps or unnecessary duplication.

The *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* report identifies missions of the armed services and provides information about capabilities and previously identified areas of duplication. The report restates the 10 missions of the armed forces identified in the Defense Strategic Guidance, and identifies some protected capabilities and investments needed to carry out each of the missions. For example, the report restates DOD's mission to project power despite anti-access / area denial challenges.²⁵ It then lists five key enhancements and protected capabilities associated with this mission: enhance electronic warfare, develop a new penetrating bomber, protect the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program, sustain undersea dominance and enhance capabilities, and develop and enhance preferred munitions capabilities. Additionally, the report also mentioned some previously identified areas of duplication and actions that were subsequently taken, such as eliminating redundancy in intelligence organizations, or proceeding with previous plans to eliminate organizations that performed duplicative functions or outlived their original purpose: the report notes the consolidation of specialized intelligence offices across DOD into two Defense Intelligence Agency task forces focused on counterterrorism and terrorism finance. Finally, the report also provides specific information about Information Operations as well as detention and interrogation, both of which were required to be included in this Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review.²⁶ Prior to the submission to Congress, senior DOD leadership—including the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Development, the DOD General Counsel, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs, Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), Director of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation, Director of the Joint Staff, Under Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of the Army, and Secretary of the Air Force—internally concurred that the submission met the statutory requirement according to

²⁵Anti-access refers to those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area. Area denial refers to those actions and capabilities, usually shorter-range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area.

²⁶Ike Skelton National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011, Pub. L. No. 111-383, §942(a).

a tracking sheet used by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy.

While the submission identifies core missions for the armed services and provides some information about capabilities and competencies needed for those missions, it does not provide sufficiently detailed information about other statutorily required elements of the roles and missions assessment. In our review of the report, we found that DOD did not, for any of the 10 missions, clearly identify the components within the department responsible for providing the core competencies and capabilities, or identify any plans to address any capability gaps or unnecessary duplication. For example:

- The submission does not provide clear and sufficiently detailed information on which component or components are responsible for enhancing electronic warfare capabilities, which is identified by DOD as one of the key capabilities needed to project power despite anti-access / area denial challenges. In our prior work, we have found that DOD needed to strengthen its management and oversight of electronic warfare programs and activities, reduce overlap, and improve its return on its multibillion-dollar acquisition investments.²⁷ DOD has acknowledged that it faces ongoing challenges in determining whether the current level of investment is optimally

²⁷GAO, *Electronic Warfare: DOD Actions Needed to Strengthen Management and Oversight*, [GAO-12-479](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 9, 2012). We identified DOD's airborne electronic attack programs as an area of fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in 2012. GAO, *2012 Annual Report: Opportunities to Reduce Duplication, Overlap and Fragmentation, Achieve Savings, and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-12-342SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Feb. 28, 2012). Last updated in [GAO-14-343SP](#). See also GAO, *Airborne Electronic Attack: Achieving Mission Objectives Depends on Overcoming Acquisition Challenges*, [GAO-12-175](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 29, 2012). Also, in August 2013, we found that the assessment of the Next Generation Jammer program did not examine all of the program's roles or take into account the military services' evolving airborne electronic attack investment plans to aid the department in reducing unnecessary duplication. We recommended that DOD (1) require the Next Generation Jammer capability development document to discuss potential redundancies, and (2) discuss potential overlapping capabilities in the next Electronic Warfare Strategy Report to Congress. DOD agreed to continue to assess unnecessary duplication and provide information about overlapping capabilities in the next strategy report, but did not agree that the capability development document should be used to assess duplication and redundancies. GAO, *Next Generation Jammer: DOD Should Continue to Assess Potential Duplication and Overlap As Program Moves Forward*, [GAO-13-642](#) (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 20, 2013).

matched with the existing capability gaps.²⁸ However, its submission does not provide sufficiently detailed information of its approach to assign responsibilities, close potential gaps, or eliminate unnecessary duplication.

- The submission also does not provide clear and sufficiently detailed information on which components are responsible for enhancing airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities, which are required for counterterrorism and irregular warfare missions. In our prior work, we have found that ineffective acquisition practices and collaboration efforts in the DOD unmanned aircraft systems portfolio creates overlap and the potential for duplication among a number of current programs and systems.²⁹ Similarly, we have noted that opportunities exist to avoid unnecessary redundancies and maximize the efficient use of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities.³⁰ However, DOD's submission does not clarify responsibilities among the Air Force, Army, or Navy for developing these capabilities.

This is the second time that DOD did not provide sufficiently detailed information to Congress following its roles and missions assessment. In the first *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report* submitted to Congress in 2009, DOD identified the core missions of the department and identified the DOD Joint Capabilities Areas as the core competencies for the department.³¹ However, the report did not provide details for all elements required of the assessment. For example, the report did not

²⁸See [GAO-12-479](#). DOD generally concurred with our recommendations to strengthen the management, oversight, and coordination of electronic warfare policy and programs and has reissued the DOD Directive defining the department's electronic warfare policy—updating the policy, definitions, and responsibilities.

²⁹[GAO-12-342SP](#). DOD provided technical comments and noted that discussions to share hardware and software technology were ongoing.

³⁰GAO, *Opportunities to Reduce Potential Duplication in Government Programs, Save Tax Dollars, and Enhance Revenue*, [GAO-11-318SP](#) (Washington, D.C.: Mar. 1, 2011). Last updated in [GAO-14-343SP](#). DOD partially concurred with our recommendations and has designed and begun implementing an architecture for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance that may aid the department in aligning its strategic goals.

³¹Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report* (January 2009). Joint capability areas are collections of like DOD capabilities functionally grouped to support capability analysis, strategy development, investment decision making, capability portfolio management, and capabilities-based force development and operational planning.

provide core competencies and capabilities—including identifying responsible organizations—for each of the missions; instead the report provided some capability information for only specific focus areas within some of these missions. Despite the limited information contained in the 2009 *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review Report*, the department used that first review to inform changes later made in DOD Directive 5100.01, which establishes functions of the department and its major components. However, as a result of not providing clear, sufficiently detailed, and relevant information in the most recent submission, DOD did not provide Congress comprehensive information about roles, responsibilities, and needed capabilities and competencies that Congress was seeking.

DOD Did Not Conduct a Comprehensive Process for the Roles and Missions Assessment

DOD did not conduct a comprehensive process for the roles and missions assessment. Instead DOD limited its approach to leveraging the results of another review, conducted in 2011, that resulted in the January 2012 release of the Defense Strategic Guidance. However, this earlier review was not intended to assess all elements the statute required of the roles and missions review and, as a result, by relying on it DOD does not have the assurance that its resulting assessment was comprehensive. We recognize that there were some benefits to this approach, as the Defense Strategic Guidance did identify primary missions of the armed services, which were then provided as the core missions required for the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. In addition, the Defense Strategic Guidance provided several principles to guide the force and program development necessary to achieve these missions. The Defense Strategic Guidance also became the basis for completing the most recent Quadrennial Defense Review. However, neither DOD's review for preparing the Defense Strategic Guidance nor the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review itself clearly identified the components within the department that are responsible for providing the core competencies and capabilities needed to address each of the primary missions, or plans for addressing any capability gaps or unnecessary duplication.

Further, by using such an approach for preparing the roles and missions assessment, DOD did not document and follow key principles for

conducting an effective and comprehensive assessment.³² These principles include (1) developing and documenting a planned approach, including the principles or assumptions that will inform the assessment, which addresses all statutory requirements; (2) involving key internal stakeholders; (3) identifying and seeking input from appropriate external stakeholders; and (4) establishing time frames with milestones for conducting the assessment and completing the report.

- *Planned approach:* DOD did not develop and document its planned approach, including the principles or assumptions used to inform and address all statutory requirements of the assessment.³³ Specifically, it did not document in its approach how it was going to address the statutory requirements related to the identification of components responsible for providing the core competencies and capabilities, any gaps, or any unnecessary duplication. A documented, planned approach provides a framework for understanding the strategic direction and the assumptions used to identify, analyze, assess, and address the statutory requirements of the assessment.
- *Internal stakeholder involvement:* The involvement of key internal stakeholders was limited. As part of a comprehensive process, the involvement of key internal stakeholders helps ensure that the information obtained during the review is complete. According to officials from the armed services, the Joint Staff, and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, officials from those offices had a limited role in the development and review of the roles and missions assessment. For example, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not conduct an independent assessment of the roles and missions assessment prior to the broader, department-wide assessment.³⁴

³²We derived a set of key principles for conducting comprehensive assessments—such as the roles and missions review—from a broad selection of principles we have previously identified and other federal agency guidance including Office of Management and Budget, Circular No. A-11; DOD, *Information Quality Guidelines (IQG): Ensuring the Quality of Information Disseminated to the Public*; [GAO-04-408T](#); [GAO-12-621SP](#); [GAO-09-3SP](#); [GAO-06-938](#); [GAO/AIMD-00-21.3.1](#); and Interagency Security Committee, *The Risk Management Process for Federal Facilities: An Interagency Security Committee Standard*.

³³As provided by 10 U.S.C. §118b and Pub. L. No. 111-383, §942(b).

³⁴Section 118b of Title 10 of the U.S. Code requires that the Chairman of the Joint Staff conduct an independent assessment of the roles and missions of the military services prior to the Secretary's conducting the comprehensive assessment of the roles and missions within the department.

According to officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and Joint Staff, this decision was made because the Joint Chiefs of Staff had provided substantial input to, and had endorsed, the recently completed Defense Strategic Guidance. According to Joint Staff officials, the Chairman had agreed with the approach proposed by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy to rely on the review that resulted in the Defense Strategic Guidance as the primary basis for the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. The Joint Staff reviewed the submission prepared by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Chairman then cosigned the submission with the Secretary of Defense. The armed services had limited responsibility for participating in the preparation of the roles and missions submission, and were given a limited opportunity to review and provide comment on DOD's draft submission before it was submitted to Congress. In addition, officials from the Office of the Director of Administration and Management—responsible for the biennial review of DOD agencies and field activities where additional efficiencies may be identified—told us they sought an opportunity to participate in the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review process, but were not included in the review. According to an official from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, internal stakeholder involvement was incorporated from the prior, senior-level review that resulted in the Defense Strategic Guidance. However, the Office of the Director of Administration and Management was not involved in that prior review. By not considering ways to build more opportunity for stakeholder input, DOD was not well-positioned to obtain and incorporate input from across the armed services, agencies, offices, and commands within the department.

- *Identification and involvement of appropriate external stakeholders:* DOD had limited input from appropriate external stakeholders, such as Congress and federal agencies, with related national security goals. Input from Congress could have provided more specific guidance and direction for what it expected of the roles and missions assessment. According to DOD officials, they briefly discussed the assessment with some congressional staff early in the process. In addition, the 2012 *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review* report did provide specific information about Information Operations as well as detention and interrogation, as requested by Congress. This information was collected in addition to information leveraged from the review for the Defense Strategic Guidance. However, DOD officials told us that they would benefit from additional clarification of Congress's expectations when performing subsequent roles and missions assessments. For example, these officials noted that it

would be helpful if Congress highlighted which specific roles and responsibilities areas were of concern so that more detailed information might be provided about these areas in the next report. According to a DOD official, the White House was involved with the review for the Defense Strategic Guidance, but consultation with interagency partners was limited and occurred late in the process. While other federal agency partners were not involved with the latest Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review assessment, the involvement of other federal agency partners—such as the Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence—provides an opportunity to enlist their ideas, expertise, and assistance related to strategic objectives that are not solely the responsibility of DOD—such as homeland security and homeland defense.³⁵ In assessing the capabilities and competencies, but not obtaining input from appropriate external stakeholders, DOD did not have additional support and input for the assessment of its roles and missions, or input as to what these stakeholders expected as an outcome of the assessment.

- *Time frames:* DOD did not develop a schedule to gauge progress for conducting the assessment and completing the report. Developing a schedule with time frames is useful to keep the overall review on track to meet deadlines and to produce a final product. However, aside from tracking the final review of the report in tracking sheets used by the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and Joint Staff, DOD did not have planning documents that outlined specific time frames with milestones associated with conducting the assessment—including time allotted for conducting the assessment itself, soliciting input from internal and external stakeholders, and drafting the report prior to circulation for final review. The lack of such a schedule may have been a contributing factor to the delay in DOD's submission. The report was required to be submitted to the congressional defense committees no later than the date in which the President's budget request for the next fiscal year was provided to Congress, which was

³⁵For example, within DOD's broader homeland defense mission, DOD is the lead agency for the maritime homeland defense effort in defending against traditional external threats, but this mission involves global coordination between DOD components and interagency partners, including the U.S. Coast Guard, across areas where the military is actively deployed and in the maritime approaches to and territorial waters of the United States. For more information, see GAO, *Homeland Defense: Actions Needed to Improve DOD Planning and Coordination for Maritime Operations*, [GAO-11-661](#) (Washington, D.C.: June, 23, 2011).

February 13, 2012; however, the report was submitted on July 20, 2012.

DOD's approach for the latest Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review also differed from the department's approach for preparing the 2009 *Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review*. For the 2009 effort, DOD developed and documented guidance in a "terms of reference" that included, among other things, a methodological approach, time frames with deliverables, and a list of offices within DOD responsible for conducting portions of the assessment. However, no similar document was developed for the 2012 roles and missions assessment. According to officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, the 2009 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review occurred before DOD had to address the challenges of the current fiscal climate, and as a result there might have been more interest in conducting the review. In contrast, in preparing the 2012 roles and missions review, the officials told us that senior DOD leadership had recently considered these difficult issues in preparing the Defense Strategic Guidance, and so preferred to rely on those recent discussions rather than conduct a separate review.

According to DOD officials, the primary reason that they did not perform a separate effort to examine roles and missions is that the statutory assessment and reporting requirements of the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review are largely duplicative of the review conducted for the Defense Strategic Guidance, as well as other reviews and processes. DOD officials stated that identifying core missions as well as core competencies and capabilities is also mirrored in the requirements for the Quadrennial Defense Review. Additionally, according to DOD officials, the annual budget process is designed to identify and assign capabilities within each service's budget request, eliminate capability and capacity gaps, and eliminate unnecessary duplication among DOD components. However, by not conducting a specific, comprehensive roles and missions assessment, DOD missed an opportunity to examine these issues through a broad, department-wide approach, rather than through processes established for other purposes.

Conclusions

Strategic assessments of the roles, missions, and needed competencies and capabilities within DOD—whether conducted through the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review or some other strategic-level,

department-wide assessment—can be used to inform the department and strengthen congressional oversight.³⁶ Given the complex security challenges and increased fiscal pressures that the department faces, such assessments are important to help the department prioritize human capital and other investment needs across the many components within the department. Without a comprehensive roles and missions assessment, documented in a sufficiently detailed report, DOD missed an opportunity to lay the groundwork for the Quadrennial Defense Review and other department-wide reviews, allocate responsibilities among the many components within DOD, prioritize key capabilities and competencies, inform the department's investments and budget requests, identify any unnecessary duplication resulting in cost savings through increased efficiency and effectiveness, and aid congressional oversight. A comprehensive process that outlined a planned approach for addressing all statutory requirements of the roles and missions assessment; involved key internal stakeholders; offered an opportunity for key external stakeholders, such as Congress, to provide input regarding the department's approach; and set clear time frames to gauge progress for the assessment, would have helped provide DOD with reasonable assurance that its resulting assessment of roles and missions was comprehensive and that DOD was positioned to provide such a sufficiently detailed report to Congress.

Recommendation for Executive Action

To assist DOD in conducting any future comprehensive assessments of roles and missions that reflect appropriate statutory requirements, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense develop a comprehensive process that includes

- a planned approach, including the principles or assumptions used to inform the assessment, that addresses all statutory requirements;
- the involvement of key DOD stakeholders, such as the armed services, Joint Staff, and other officials within the department;
- an opportunity to identify and involve appropriate external stakeholders, to provide input to inform the assessment; and

³⁶As of June 2014, the House of Representatives had adopted legislation amending 10 U.S.C. § 118, which, if enacted, may alter the reporting requirement for the Quadrennial Defense Review and Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. See *H.R. 4435, 113th Cong. §1077 (2014)* and *H.R. Rep. 113-446 at 226-27 (2014)*.

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- time frames with milestones for conducting the assessment and for reporting on its results.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

In written comments on a draft of this report, DOD partially concurred with the report's recommendation to develop a comprehensive process to assist in conducting future assessments of roles and missions. DOD's comments are summarized below and reprinted in appendix II.

In its comments, DOD agreed that it is important to make strategy-driven decisions regarding its missions and associated competencies and capabilities, and to assign and clarify to its components their roles and responsibilities. DOD noted that, in the context of dynamic strategic and budgetary circumstances and increasing fiscal uncertainty, the department leveraged its strategic planning and annual budget processes, which resulted in the release of the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance and associated mission, capability, and force structure priorities to inform and address the 2012 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. Specifically, DOD commented on the four recommended principles of a comprehensive process:

- Regarding a planned approach, the department stated that it determined that using other, ongoing strategic planning efforts to complete the roles and missions assessment met the review's statutory requirement. As noted in the report, there were some benefits to DOD's taking advantage of other processes. However, DOD did not document its approach for identifying the components within the department responsible for providing the core competencies and capabilities, or identify any capability gaps or unnecessary duplication. A documented, planned approach provides a framework for understanding the strategic direction and the assumptions used to identify, analyze, assess, and address the statutory requirements of the assessment.
- Regarding DOD stakeholders, the department stated that the processes it used did include the involvement of key DOD stakeholders, but acknowledged that formally documenting the process for obtaining stakeholder input would have clarified the role of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Documenting the decision regarding the Chairman's role would have provided some clarification; however, as noted in the report, it is also important to obtain and document input from all key internal stakeholders—including the armed services, agencies, offices, and commands within the department.

-
- Regarding external stakeholders, the department stated that it did seek limited additional clarification from Congress prior to conducting the roles and missions assessment, but did not seek formal input to the assessment from other federal agencies because it relied on the external stakeholder input obtained during the development of the Defense Strategic Guidance. However, during the course of our review, a DOD official told us there was limited involvement from other federal agency partners during the review for the Defense Strategic Guidance. As noted in the report, not obtaining input from appropriate external stakeholders—such as the Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, and Office of the Director of National Intelligence—when assessing the capabilities and competencies hindered DOD from having the additional support for the assessment of its roles and missions.
 - Regarding time frames and milestones, the department stated that the development of time frames just for the roles and missions assessment would have been largely duplicative of existing time frames for other efforts, including the development of the Defense Strategic Guidance and the annual budget process. However, developing a schedule with time frames would have been useful to keep the roles and missions assessment on track and aid the department in submitting its report by the statutory deadline.

Developing a comprehensive process for its roles and missions assessment—a process that outlined the department’s planned approach for addressing all statutory requirements, involved key internal stakeholders, offered an opportunity for Congress and other key external stakeholders to provide input, and set clear time frames to gauge progress for the assessment—would have helped provide DOD with reasonable assurance that its resulting assessment was comprehensive. The department’s approach resulted in a report that was insufficiently detailed, therefore, we continue to believe the recommendation is valid to guide future roles and missions reviews.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees; the Secretary of Defense; the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; the Secretaries of the Army, of the Navy, and of the Air Force; the Commandant of the Marine Corps; DOD’s Director of Administration and Management; and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget. In addition, this report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3489 or PendletonJ@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix III.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John H. Pendleton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

John H. Pendleton
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management

List of Committees

The Honorable Carl Levin
Chairman
The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chairman
The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

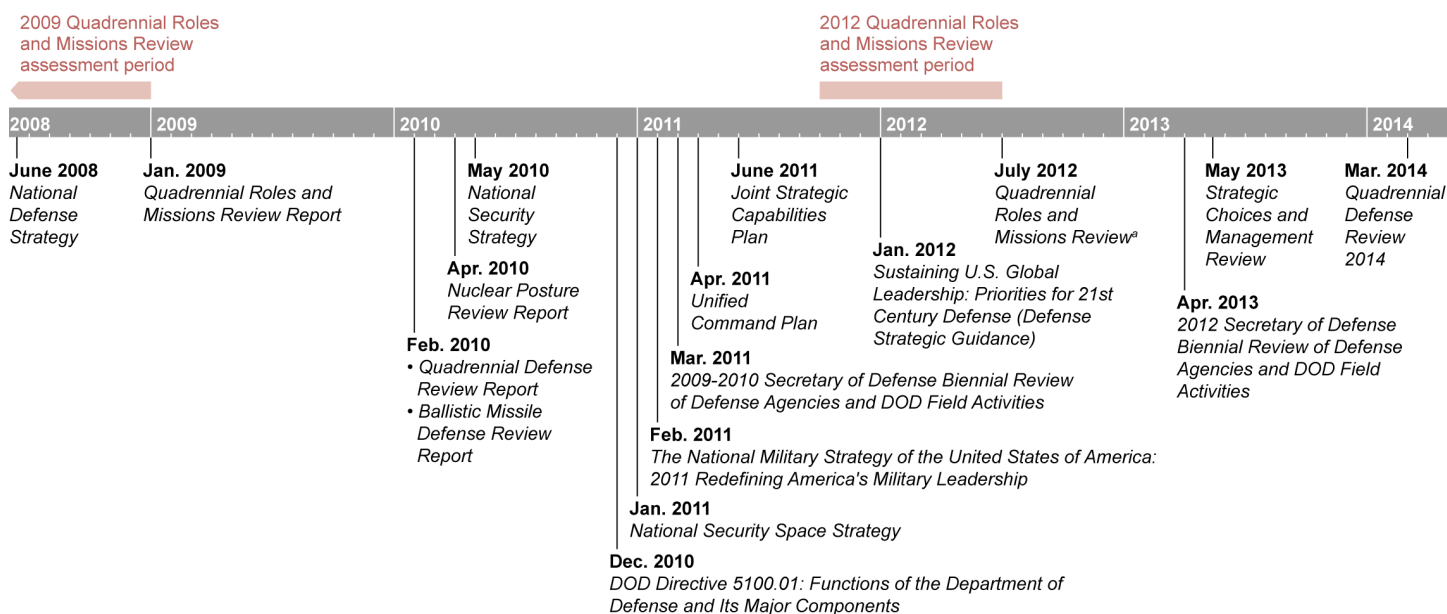
The Honorable Howard P. "Buck" McKeon
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
The Honorable Pete Visclosky
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Defense
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives

Appendix I: Related Strategic Reviews and Other Selected Strategic and Planning Documents

The Department of Defense (DOD) is required to regularly assess and report on its roles and missions in the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review.¹ The most recently completed Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review occurred amid a series of strategy and policy reviews that DOD has undertaken over the past 6 years, including the first Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review conducted in 2009.² Figure 1 provides a timeline of the issuance of select DOD strategic-level reports and other documents that contain roles and missions-related information.

Figure 1: Selected Roles and Missions–Related Documents



Source: GAO analysis of strategy and planning documents from the Department of Defense (DOD), the Office of the President, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. | GAO-14-668

^aIn July 2012, DOD submitted the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review report, together with the *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* originally issued in January 2012, to address the statutory requirement to report on the roles and missions review.

¹10 U.S.C. §118b.

²For the 2009 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review, DOD conducted its assessment from April 2008 until January 2009, when the report was submitted to Congress. The 2012 assessment was conducted from October 2011 until its submission in July 2012.

National Defense Strategy

The National Defense Strategy provides the foundation and strategic framework for much of the department's strategic guidance.³ Specifically, it addresses how the military services plan to fight and win America's wars and describes how DOD plans to support the objectives outlined in the President's National Security Strategy. It also provides a framework for other DOD strategic guidance related to deliberate planning, force development, and intelligence. Further, the National Defense Strategy informs the National Military Strategy and describes plans to support the objectives outlined in the President's National Security Strategy.

Quadrennial Defense Review

By law, DOD is required to conduct the Quadrennial Defense Review every 4 years to determine and express the nation's defense strategy and establish a defense program for the next 20 years.⁴ The review is to comprise a comprehensive examination of the national defense strategy, force structure, force modernization plans, infrastructure, budget planning, and other elements of the defense program and policies of the United States. The Quadrennial Defense Review also includes an evaluation by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the military's ability to successfully execute its missions. The latest Quadrennial Defense Review was issued in March 2014.⁵ In addition to these strategic reviews conducted at DOD, both the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State released strategic reviews that provide a strategic framework to guide the activities

³Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy* (June 2008).

⁴Congress created a continuing requirement for DOD to conduct a Quadrennial Defense Review every 4 years in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-65 § 901 (1999), codified at 10 U.S.C. § 118. As of June 2014, legislation has been passed in the House of Representatives to change 10 U.S.C. § 118, which, if enacted, may alter the reporting requirement for the Quadrennial Defense Review and Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. *H.R. Rep. 4435 113th Cong. §1077* (2014). See, *H.R. Rep. 113-446 at 226-17* (2014).

⁵Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* (March 2014).

to secure the homeland and to provide a blueprint for diplomatic and development efforts.⁶

Ballistic Missile Defense Review

The Ballistic Missile Defense Review, released in February 2010, is a review conducted pursuant to guidance from the President and the Secretary of Defense, while also addressing the statutory requirement to assess U.S. ballistic missile defense policy and strategy. This review evaluated the threats posed by ballistic missiles and developed a missile defense posture to address current and future challenges. Specifically, this review sought to align U.S. missile defense posture with near-term regional missile threats and sustain the ability to defend the homeland against limited long-range missile attack.

Nuclear Posture Review

The Nuclear Posture Review is a statutorily mandated review that establishes U.S. nuclear policy, strategy, capabilities and force posture for the next 5 to 10 years.⁷ The latest review was released by DOD in April 2010 and provided a roadmap for implementing the President's policy for reducing nuclear risks to the United States and the international community. Specifically, the 2010 report identified long-term modernization goals and requirements, including sustaining a safe, secure, and effective nuclear arsenal through the life extension of existing nuclear weapons; increasing investments to rebuild and modernize the nation's nuclear infrastructure; and strengthening the science, technology, and engineering base.

National Security Strategy

The National Security Strategy describes and discusses the worldwide interests, goals, and objectives of the United States that are vital to its national security and calls for a range of actions to implement the

⁶Department of State, *Leading through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (July 2010); and Department of Homeland Security, *Quadrennial Homeland Security Review Report: A Strategic Framework for a Secure Homeland* (February 2010).

⁷DOD, *Nuclear Posture Review Report* (Washington, D.C.: April 2010).

strategy.⁸ The most recent National Security Strategy, released by the President in May 2010, addressed, among other things, how the United States would strengthen its global leadership position; disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda; and achieve economic recovery at home and abroad. This strategy also emphasized the need for a whole-of-government approach with interagency engagement to ensure the security of the American people and the protection of American interests. The National Security Strategy is to be used to inform the National Defense Strategy and the National Military Strategy.

DOD Directive 5100.01

DOD Directive 5100.01 established the functions of the department and its major components. DOD reissued the directive in 2010 after the first Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review included what DOD describes as a thorough review of the directive. DOD updated the prior directive to incorporate emerging responsibilities in areas such as special operations and cyberspace operations and reflect other changes in the department's organization over the preceding decade.

Space Posture Review

The Space Posture Review is a statutorily mandated review of U.S. national security space policy and objectives, conducted jointly by the Secretary of Defense and the Director of National Intelligence.⁹ Through coordination with the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, DOD released the *National Security Space Strategy* in January 2011. The strategy is derived from principles and goals found in the National Space Policy and builds on the strategic approach laid out in the National Security Strategy. Specifically, the strategy's stated objectives for national space security include strengthening safety, stability, and security in space; maintaining and enhancing the strategic national security advantages afforded to the United States by space; and engaging the space industrial base that supports U.S. national security.

⁸President of the United States, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: May 2010).

⁹Department of Defense and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *National Security Space Strategy* (January 2011).

National Military Strategy and the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan

The National Military Strategy and the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, along with other strategic documents, provide DOD with guidance and instruction on military policy, strategy, plans, forces and resource requirements and allocations essential to successful execution of the National Security Strategy and other Presidential Directives. Specifically, the National Military Strategy, last issued in 2011, provides focus for military activities by defining a set of interrelated military objectives from which the service chiefs and combatant commanders identify desired capabilities and against which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff assesses risk.¹⁰ This strategy defines the national military objectives, describes how to accomplish these objectives, and addresses the military capabilities required to execute the strategy. The Secretary of Defense's National Defense Strategy informs the National Military Strategy, which is developed by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In addition, the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan is to provide guidance to the combatant commanders, the chiefs of the military services, and other DOD agencies to accomplish tasks and missions based on current capabilities. It also is to serve as the link between other strategic guidance and the joint operation planning activities.

Biennial Review of DOD Agencies and Field Activities

By law, DOD is required to conduct a review every 2 years of the services and supplies that each DOD agency and field activity provides.¹¹ The Office of the Director of Administration and Management in the Office of the Secretary of Defense has led this biennial review. The goals are to determine whether DOD needs each of these agencies and activities, or whether it is more effective, economical, or efficient for the armed services to assume the responsibilities. However, unlike the Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review, which assesses the roles of all DOD components, the biennial review focuses on DOD agencies and field activities. The Secretary of Defense recently directed that the biennial review should also include an assessment of the offices within the Office

¹⁰Department of Defense, *National Military Strategy of the United States of America: Redefining America's Military Leadership* (Washington, D.C.: February 2011).

¹¹10 U.S.C. §192c.

of the Secretary of Defense.¹² DOD issued the latest report on this biennial review in April 2013.¹³

Unified Command Plan

The Unified Command Plan provides guidance to combatant commanders and establishes their missions, responsibilities, force structure, geographic area of responsibility, and other attributes. Section 161 of Title 10 of the U.S. Code tasks the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to conduct a review of the plan not less often than every 2 years and submit recommended changes to the President through the Secretary of Defense. The Unified Command Plan was last updated in 2011.¹⁴

Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense

The *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* report (also referred to as the Defense Strategic Guidance), released in January 2012, was directed by the President to identify the strategic interests of the United States. The document states that it was an assessment of the defense strategy prompted by the changing geopolitical environment and fiscal pressures. The Defense Strategic Guidance was developed by senior officials from DOD—including the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the armed services, and the combatant commands—and the White House. The document outlines security challenges the United States faces and is intended to guide the development of the Joint Force through 2020 and during a period of anticipated fiscal constraints. The Defense Strategic Guidance identified 10 primary missions of the armed forces:

- counter terrorism and irregular warfare;
- deter and defeat aggression;

¹²Department of Defense, *Office of the Secretary of Defense Organizational Review Follow-on Actions*, Memorandum for Deputy Chief Management Officer Director of Administration and Management (Dec. 4, 2013).

¹³Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Director of Administration and Management, *Secretary of Defense 2012 Biennial Review of Defense Agencies and DOD Field Activities* (April 2013).

¹⁴Department of Defense, *Unified Command Plan* (updated Sept. 12, 2011).

- project power despite anti-access / area denial challenges;¹⁵
- counter weapons of mass destruction;
- operate effectively in cyberspace and space;
- maintain a safe, secure, and effective nuclear deterrent;
- defend the Homeland and provide support to civil authorities;
- provide a stabilizing presence;
- conduct stability and counterinsurgency operations; and
- conduct humanitarian, disaster relief, and other operations.

It also identified several principles to guide the force and program development necessary to achieve these missions. For example, it noted the need for the department to continue to reduce costs through reducing the rate of growth of manpower costs, and the identification of additional efficiencies.

Strategic Choices Management Review

In March 2013, the Secretary of Defense directed the completion of a Strategic Choices Management Review. The Strategic Choices Management Review was to examine the potential effect of additional, anticipated budget reductions on the department and develop options for performing the missions in the Defense Strategic Guidance. Specifically, the review was to inform how the department would allocate resources when executing its fiscal year 2014 budget and preparing its fiscal year 2015 through fiscal year 2019 budget plans. According to the Secretary of Defense, the purpose of the Strategic Choices Management Review was to understand the effect of further budget reductions on the department and develop options to deal with these additional reductions. The Secretary of Defense further emphasized that producing a detailed budget blueprint was not the purpose of this review.

¹⁵Anti-access refers to those actions and capabilities, usually long-range, designed to prevent an opposing force from entering an operational area. Area denial refers to those actions and capabilities, usually shorter-range, designed not to keep an opposing force out, but to limit its freedom of action within the operational area.

Appendix II: Comments from the Department of Defense



POLICY

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
2000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-2000

JUL 14 2014

Mr. John H. Pendleton
Director, Defense Capabilities and Management
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Pendleton:

This is the Department of Defense response to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) draft report GAO-14-668, "DEFENSE MANAGEMENT: DOD Needs to Improve Future Assessments of Roles and Missions," dated June 26, 2014 (GAO Code 351862). The Department partially concurs with the four recommendations in the report (see Enclosure A for details). The Department agrees with the GAO that it is important to make strategy-driven decisions regarding its missions and associated competencies and capabilities, and to assign and clarify to its components their roles and responsibilities. In the context of dynamically evolving strategic and budgetary circumstances, and increasing fiscal uncertainty, the Department leveraged its strategic planning and annual budget processes resulting in the release of the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance and associated mission, capability, and force structure priorities to inform and address the 2012 Quadrennial Roles and Missions reporting requirement.

The Department appreciates the opportunity to respond to your draft report. We look forward to your continued cooperation and dialogue toward improving ongoing and future roles and missions work. Should you have any questions, please contact Mr. Brian Arakelian, (703) 697-4653, brian.m.arakelian.civ@mail.mil.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R M Scher".

Robert M. Scher
Acting Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for
Strategy, Plans, and Forces

Enclosure A

**GAO DRAFT REPORT DATED JUNE 26, 2014
GAO-14-668 (GAO CODE 351862)**

**“DEFENSE MANAGEMENT: DOD NEEDS TO IMPROVE FUTURE
ASSESSMENTS OF ROLES AND MISSIONS”**

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS
TO THE GAO RECOMMENDATION**

RECOMMENDATION: The GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense develop a comprehensive process that includes:

- a planned approach, including the principles or assumptions used to inform the assessment that addresses all statutory requirements;
- the involvement of key DoD stakeholders, such as the armed forces, Joint Staff, and other officials within the department;
- an opportunity to identify and involve appropriate external stakeholders, to provide input to inform the assessment; and
- time frames with milestones for conducting the assessment and for reporting on its results.

DoD RESPONSE: DoD partially concurs with the four GAO recommendations on improving future assessments of roles and missions. Specifically:

- “a planned approach, including the principles or assumptions used to inform the assessment that addresses all statutory requirements”:
 - Partially concur. For the 2012 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review, DoD did use a planned assessment approach, which Departmental leadership concurred did meet the review’s statutory requirements despite the absence of explicitly-documented principles and assumptions. The Department chose to make use of other, ongoing strategic planning efforts to complete the roles and missions review, in particular the development of the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance (DSG).
- “the involvement of key DoD stakeholders, such as the armed forces, Joint Staff, and other officials within the department”:
 - Partially concur. The processes leveraged to inform the 2012 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review did involve key DOD stakeholders. For example, the decision for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff not to do a separate assessment for roles and missions was made because the Joint Chiefs of Staff had provided substantial input to, and had endorsed, the recently completed DSG.

However, formally documenting the process, as noted above, would have clarified this decision in relation to the reporting requirement.

- “an opportunity to identify and involve appropriate external stakeholders, to provide input to inform the assessment”:
 - Partially concur. DoD sought limited additional clarification from Congress prior to conducting the 2012 Quadrennial Roles and Missions Review. The Department did not seek formal input to the review from other federal agencies. However, external stakeholders did contribute to the process used to develop the DSG, which subsequently informed the roles and missions assessment.
- “time frames with milestones for conducting the assessment and for reporting on its results”:
 - Partially concur. The Department concluded that time frames with milestones for conducting this assessment would have been largely duplicative of the DSG review process, as well as other reviews and processes, such as the annual budget process, which did follow internally agreed-upon milestones.

Appendix III: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, key contributors to this report were Margaret Morgan and Kevin L. O'Neill, Assistant Directors; Tracy Abdo; Darreisha M. Bates; Elizabeth Curda; Leia Dickerson; Gina Flacco; Brent Helt; Mae Jones; Amie Lesser; Travis Masters; Judy McCloskey; Terry Richardson; and Sabrina Streagle.

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